

S E R M O N

PREACH'D at

I N V E R E S K,

On SUNDAY, *April* 26, 1746.

By JAMES GRANT, M.A.



L O N D O N:

Printed by J. BETTENHAM, for the AUTHOR.

M.DCC.XLVI.

3 E R M O 11

1873

DATE OF DEATH



AMERICAN

1873

ISAIAH V. II, 12.

Wo unto them that rise up early in the Morning, that they may follow strong Drink; that continue until Night, till Wine inflame them.

And the Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts : But they regard not the Work of the LORD, neither consider the Operation of his Hands.

MAN was placed on the Theatre of this magnificent World, that he might contemplate the Works of God ; but now alas the Days of religious Attention and Regard to the awful Steps of Providence are in a manner quite gone, and giddy Pleasure, or atheistical Ignorance have taken their Place.

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Though

Though the King of Glory knocks at the Door of our Hearts, both by his Mercies and Judgments, his Clemency and Severities, his awful Justice and condescending Love ; yet we still go on in a thoughtless inconsiderate Manner, and under the most terrible and awakening Strokes, appear to be as destitute of serious Reflection as the Beasts that perish.

When any remarkable Event happens, such as the Extinction of the late Rebellion, we join indeed with the popular Cry in extolling our Deliverance, and in the Way of common Speculation, are apt to talk of it as wonderful and marvellous, without allowing it to sink so deep into our Hearts, as to produce any Reformation in the Life and Practice ; our Minds seem to be more employed about the external Marks of Gratitude, rather than in studying those Parts which are of a more sublime and rational Nature.

This appears to be the very Crime which the Prophet accuses the *Jewish* Nation of, in the Words of our Text.

He had before, in the preceding Verses, represented their horrid Ingratitude to God,
under



under the Parable of a Vineyard, together with the dreadful Judgments they might deservedly expect upon the Account thereof: And now in the 11th and 12th, he brings a heavy Charge against their Intemperance and Sensuality, and the riotous Method of solemnizing their anniversary Festivals. *Wo to them that rise up early and sit, &c.*

Here was Mirth and Jollity enough, but little or no Religion; for instead of spending the Time in devout Praises and Thanksgivings, their whole Business was, to make a showy and splendid Appearance, to commit the most extravagant Riots, and launch forth into all the Pleasures of Luxury and Voluptuousness. God forbid, that this should be any Part of our Behaviour, in the Day of a favourable Visitation; and to the End I may contribute all in my Power to prevent it, the following Method, through divine Assistance, shall be observed.

FIRST, To point out those particular Characters of the Almighty's Operations, which are so much worthy of our Contemplation.

SECONDLY, To shew what Influence the Knowledge of each of these several Characters ought to have upon us.

AND, In the last Place, to make some Application, suitable to the present Temper and Circumstances of this Nation.

The first of these two Heads, for the greater Perspicuity and Clearness, I shall throw together ; and to begin then, let it be observed, in the first Place,

(1.) That all the Doings and Acts of the Lord, are regulated by the Standards of invariable Wisdom and Rectitude, impartial Equity, and paternal Goodness.

Were he entirely made up of Justice, we might be justly tempted to look upon him, as a stern and inflexible Being; deaf to the Cries and Intreaties of his helpless and distressed Creatures: Were Power the only Perfection he could boast of, our Thoughts would naturally represent him as an arbitrary and despotick Tyrant, who might ruin our most essential Interests, and at his Pleasure throw all our Affairs into Confusion.

But this is not the Case ; as he is both wise in Heart, and mighty in Strength; wonderful in Counsel and excellent in Working ; Righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works ; good to every one, and his Mercy enduring for ever.

And

And surely the natural Influence, which this Consideration ought to have upon us, is no less than to encourage our Hope and Confidence in him at all Times and in all Places.

From the Notion of a wise, an able, and gracious Ruler, must necessarily spring both inward Peace and Tranquillity, and outward Security and Protection; on this we may rely with full Satisfaction, and they who love Righteousness may be joyful in the Lord.

He, according to his own Royal Word and Promise, will be their Rock and Fortrefs, their Shield and mighty Deliverer: They need not be afraid for the Terrors by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day, nor for the Pestilence that walketh in Darknes, nor the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-day; his Eyes will be always upon the Righteous, and his Ears open to their Cry; in the most dangerous and critical Times he can be a strong Hold to the Prisoners of Hope, and provide Chambers of Protection to them who repose their Trust and Confidence in him.

(2.) But another Character of the Almighty's Operations worthy of our Notice, is the surprising Manner of their Production beyond our Counsel and Foresight: Tho' Justice and Judgment be the Habitation of his Throne; yet in this present Administration of Things, the Steps of his Providence are oftentimes very intricate and mysterious to us, encompassed about with Clouds and Darkness.

The Event does not always answer our Expectation, but the Deity, in the unsearchable Depth of his Wisdom, is pleased to take his own Methods, incomprehensible to Mortals, and frequently interposes to defeat the most promising Projects both of the Righteous and the Wicked.

Solomon, a Man of the largest Views, and most extensive Experience, observes, *That the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, but that Time and Chance happeneth unto all.* And surely then, the natural Influence of this Consideration should be to render us sensible of our own Insufficiency, and entirely dependant upon God, who acteth according to his wise and good Purpose, among the mighty
Armies

Armies above, and among the Inhabitants below.

When publick Transactions go on in such a Manner as to look like the Effects of human Foresight and Contrivance, we are apt to stop short in our Reflections, without directing a Thought to that invifible Being, who holds the Reins of Government in his Hands, and gives second Causes fuch Turns and Motions, as may beft promote his own Glory, and the general Welfare of the Creation.

For though we be apt to impute any prosperous or unfortunate Event to Chance; yet the moft fortuitous and accidental Things are all a wife and prudent Contrivance of the Almighty, the Refult of the deepeft Counfel and cleareft Foresight.

Let therefore no Instrument, or fecond Cause be too much magnified or contemn'd, feeing every Thing that happens, is the Doing of the Lord, and of Confequence ought to be marvellous in our Eyes. *Let not the rich Man glory in his Riches, nor the ftrong Man in his Might; but rather let us all with a becoming Refignation and Humility*

of Soul, pay that Honour and Respect which is due to Providence.

(3.) But another Character of the Almighty's Operations, very worthy of our Notice, is the Performance and Accomplishment of them in the Face of much Opposition and Difficulty. He is not only infinitely wise to contrive the best Method of Action, but likewise infinitely powerful, and capable of surmounting every Obstacle in his Way ; he makes his Hand eminent and conspicuous, and often doth great and terrible Things in Righteousness.

And surely then the natural Influence of this Consideration should be to fill our Minds with the most ardent Love and sincere Gratitude to the supreme Ruler and mighty Super-intendant of the Universe ; who notwithstanding the Secrecy and Closeness of the Conspirator, the Subtilty and Craft of the Politician, the Skill and Courage of the renowned and experienced Warrior, is pleased to bring about the most astonishing and affecting Events.

And for an Instance of this, we need go no further, than the several Steps of his
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providential Conduct to this Nation, during the late Rebellion.

Had the Persons concerned in that Design, been so careful as to improve the Advantages of their first Victory, and march'd forward, while their Opponents were not in a Capacity to stop their Progress: Had the Powers abroad supplied them to any considerable Extent with Men, Money and Arms; had an Invasion been attempted, while their Army was marching in Triumph thro' the Heart of the Land; flush'd with Victory, and daily adding to their Numbers and Reputation, by repeated Successes——What must have been the Consequence!

But the Lord of Hosts, and God of the Armies of *Israel*, who can strike the most formidable Armies with a Pannick, shewed Strength with his Arm, and surmounted every Obstacle and Difficulty that stood in the Way of his own Designs.

When the great Ones of the Earth are basking themselves in the Sunshine of Providence, and saying within their Hearts, by the Might of my Hand I have done it, and by my Wisdom, for I am prudent; he can seize them in the Height of their Pride and
Glory;

Glory ; and at once bring down to the Grave their Pomp and the Noise of their Viols.

For he beareth in his Hand a Rod of Iron, and hath always such a Variety of Means in his Power, as are sufficient to overturn the greatest Fortune, to throw down the proudest Aspirer, to impoverish the wealthiest Prince, and in a Moment to load with Infamy and Wretchedness the highest and happiest Person in the World.

(4.) But another Character of the Almighty's Operations, very worthy of our Observation, is the Fitness and Seasonableness of their Production.

When the Event does not answer our Wishes and Preparations, and when Disappointments and Defeats come thick, and in Storms upon us, we are too apt to utter very peevish and impatient Complaints, saying with *Jehoram*, *This Evil is of the Lord, why should we wait any longer?*

Like froward Children, we censure and arraign his Conduct, and heavily murmur, that he should so long delay those Favours we most earnestly ask : But the all-wise and careful Parent of Mankind takes his own proper

proper Time of hearing and answering our Requests, and bestowing the Mercies we stand in need of: For did God always yield immediately to the Importunity of our Complaints, his Favours would actually undo us, and the Success of our Petitions prove our Ruin. He foresees what Rocks we should run upon, if allowed to steer to our own Point, and therefore in pure Mercy he denies our fatal Wishes, and makes us wait in a humble Dependance upon him, both as to Time and Manner, for any Favour we crave.

And surely the natural Influence of this Consideration should be to render us patient and submissive under every Dispensation of Divine Providence; always maintaining a constant Equanimity and Steadiness of Temper, a calm unruffled Spirit, neither allowing Prosperity to debauch us, nor Adversity to deject us, but cheerfully committing our Cause to the Wise and Righteous Judge of the Earth, who in all Events cannot do but **RIGHT**.

These are some of the Characters of the Almighty Operations which I have recommended as very worthy of our Notice and

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Observation ; and therefore I now proceed to make some Improvement suitable to what I take to be the present Case of many in this Place.

(1.) If it be so much the Duty and Business of rational Beings, to contemplate and improve the awful Steps of Providence ; then let me caution you all against the Crime of the *Israelites* in our Text, who shamefully neglected this noble and manly Work on their Festival Days, and gave themselves up to all manner of licentious, riotous and extravagant Mirth.

If our Joy for any great and important Event be not religious, rational and temperate, it is no better than the Raptures of Enthusiasm ; than the Sallies of a *volatile* Imagination, or the roving Fits of a wanton Fancy.

The greatest Pomp, and Show, and Splendor in the World, may be the Work of Hypocrisy, and the Talk of the Lips ; but Obedience and Reformation are the Language of the Heart, and the only true and unaffected Expressions of our Gratitude to the Almighty.

The highest Pretences to Loyalty, which are not attended with, and founded upon

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Religion, are precarious and uncertain, and must be owing to nothing but Humour or Interest ; if the one be cross'd or the other interrupted ; if the Loyalist be disobliged, or his Expectations disappointed, he will raise as loud a Cry on the other Side ; and being before but very remiss and negligent in the Fear due to God, will in Process of Time come also to forget the Respect, which he owes his Prince.

Nay, the most vicious and profligate Persons are capable of assembling themselves in publick, and of crying out with *Jehu*, in the Face of the World, *Come see my Zeal for the Lord of Hosts*. Such Men can drink a Glass to the Health of their earthly Sovereign, who never bowed a Knee to the King of Kings in their Life ; they can be very generous to the Mob, though they never did a charitable or human Action in the World.

But this is not such a Feast as the Lord hath chosen, for a Man to indulge himself in riotous and licentious Mirth, or to listen to the Noise of the Pipe and the Viol ; but rather to consider the Work of the Lord, and regard the Operation of his Hands ; to
loose

loose the Bands of Wickedness, to undo the heavy Burthens, and let the Oppressed go free : It is to deal our Bread to the Hungry, to bring the Poor to our House, to cover the Naked, and supply the Needy : The Friendless, the Helpless and the Destitute, the Orphan and the Widow should most engross our Care, and chiefly at a Time of publick Joy, fall within the Compass of our Consideration and Charity : This will yield us more Satisfaction than all the vain Amusements, or false Splendor of a gay World. For all the Mirth and Jollity we are capable of, is but a Pleasure suited to the sensitive and inferior Part of our Nature.

And how much soever showy Appearances may be commended by the unthinking Populace ; yet they have always been condemned by the more reasonable and judicious Part of Mankind, as below the Dignity of an immortal Being, and in no small Measure derogatory from the Worth of a grave and sober Character.

Besides, that these mad Frolicks, methinks, are at all other Times the most unreasonable in the Case of a Civil War ;
which

which calls equally for Mourning and Lamentation, as for Show and Splendor.

These dismal and affecting Miseries it has, and may yet bring upon our Country, should, I presume, render it more decent and comely in us to join Trembling with our Mirth, and mix Sorrow with Joy.

You reckon yourselves delivered from a very threatening Evil, and highly favoured of God, by the late memorable Event of *Culloden*; but if Pride and Insolence of Heart, if riotous and extravagant Mirth be all the Returns of Gratitude you make, and the only Expressions of your publick Joy; the Lord may renew his Chastisements with greater Severity, and make War the Fore-runner of Famine and Pestilence; besides the Dangers we are exposed to from the growing Power of foreign Enemies, and the precarious Situation of our Affairs Abroad; the great Ruler of the World hath a Variety of other Means to try and afflict us. Another domestick Sword is at his Command, and even that handful of unhappy Men, who are now scatter'd and dispers'd, he can yet strengthen anew, and make them once more the Instruments of his Justice; his Al-

mighty Breath can in a Moment blow up the dying Embers into a Flame, which unless ye repent shall spread from Village to City, and consume your Palaces. Nay, it is most astonishing to think, that we have hitherto escaped, and that a Nation so swarming with Drunkards, with formal Professors, and open Scoffers of Religion, should be so often and so miraculously delivered.

There is no doubt but God hath a Number of precious uprighted ones in this Kingdom, who have sigh'd and cried for the Abominations committed in the Midst thereof; but so far are they from indulging themselves in Riot and Voluptuousness, so far from vain and conceited boasting of their own Sufficiency, that they are humbled under a Sense of their great Unworthiness, and employed in a cautious Fear and holy Vigilance, lest they should not answer the End of God's Dispensations towards them.

(2.) But further, in the second Place, I would take Occasion to warn you against those Errors, which during the Time of a Civil War, or after its Extinction, the generality of Men are apt to fall into.

A domestick Contention is ever attended with Rancour and ill Will, which ZEAL, the most active of all Principles, never fails to produce in the Minds of those, whom different Interests, Sentiments and Views set in Opposition to one another.

There cannot a greater Judgment befall a Country, than such a dreadful Spirit of Division, as rends a Government into two distinct People, and makes them more strange and averse to one another, than if they were actually two different Nations: When this prevails, we behave like Barbarians, to all who differ from us, and extinguishes every noble, humane, and generous Sentiment which can settle in our Breast. It is lamentable to think, that where Acquaintance and Friendship has been laid in the Foundations of mutual Love and good Will, that it should at last break off in a settled Malice and Rancour, as has so often happened since the Commencement of our civil Broils.

O could I persuade you to lay aside these unmanly Dispositions, it would be as the *New Jerusalem* coming down from Heaven, and as the very Angels descending among us, even

those glorious Spirits, who adore the Father of universal Goodness, and continually cry, *Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth, and good Will towards the Sons of Men.*

Suppose we therefore any Person suddenly snatch'd out of this World in the Height of his Rancour, and immediately conveyed from some hot Contention here, to the calm and peaceable Regions above; how would it make him blush and be ashamed, to find his Temper so inconsistent with the Genius and Taste of that happy Country, where nothing but perfect Charity, and entire good Will for ever reigns?

(3.) But further, as we ought to watch against these malevolent Dispositions of Heart; so are we likewise bound to guard against all defamatory Lies, and slanderous Reflections: These are Crimes pretty common and frequent in private Life, but above all do they prevail in the Case of an intestine Quarrel, where all Parties take an unconscionable Liberty in blackening the Reputation of their Adversaries; and though every one pretends to be a Christian, or a Man of Honour, yet it is strange to see,
how

how freely they deal with some Characters, and in what a bitter and slanderous Manner they bespatter one another.

The most false and groundless Aspersions go for Words of Course, if they but serve a present Turn, and any how promote the Interest and Cause of the Party : For, as an eminent Divine expresses it, the Zealots of all Sides have got a scurvy Trick of lying for the Truth.

A base and unmanly Practice indeed, nay, and which seems not at all fitted to answer the End proposed; for besides the just Contempt and Scorn it meets with, from all Persons of Integrity and Honour, God frequently blasts, by some peculiar Providence, the Plots and Schemes of these Calumniators; and makes them fall by those very Methods of Unrighteousness, thorough which they were endeavouring to establish themselves.

(4.) But in the last Place, as we thus ought to watch against these Errors of the Heart and Tongue, so should we likewise study to forbear all those outward Acts, that can have the Appearance of too rigid and severe a Justice, behaving to our worst

Enemies in such a noble and generous Manner, as may rather charm than force, them into a better Way of thinking.

We are all equally born to trouble as the Sparks fly upward, and therefore, as no Man's present State can be so prosperous or secure, but that some unexpected Calamity may befall him, we ought to treat every one in Distress with Humanity and Kindness, even although their own Imprudence and Infatuation has perhaps proved the Cause of their Misfortunes; for, Who made us to differ is a Question ye ought all seriously to ask your own Hearts.

The Almighty and supreme Disposer of Things might have so ordered the Place of your Birth, and the Means of your Education, that ye might have imbib'd as strongly as others, those very very Principles and Prejudices which ye now so warmly exclaim against.

In your fallen and natural State ye stood all, in the Eye of your Maker, as so many condemned Criminals, worthy of Death, and yet he forgave your Offences, triumphed over your Rebellions, and

in the midst of deserved Wrath remembered Mercy.

Nay, besides the Example of this great redeeming Love in the Father, Christ himself hath set, as a Pattern before us, such an Instance of Pity and Tenderness, as no Act of human Generosity could ever equal or compare with; namely, in condescending to die for us, while we were cloathed with the odious Character of Sinners and Prodigals, Traitors and Enemies.

Love and Charity is the true Genius of his Religion, and a hard, cruel, insensible Temper is the most repugnant Thing to it in the World. Though the great Captain of our Salvation was perpetually assaulted with Provocations of the highest Kind; yet he always possessed such a sweet and amiable Disposition, as renders him worthy of our highest Esteem and constant Imitation.

When his Disciples earnestly entreated him to exert his avenging Power against the rude and inhospitable *Samaritans*, he rejected their Proposal with a noble Contempt, and rebuked their cruel and intemperate

temperate Zeal in these remarkable Words,
*Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye
 are of, for the Son of Man came not
 to destroy Mens, Lives, but to save them.*
 In which we see all the Arguments fully
 refuted, that can be brought in favour
 of any hard and severe Prosecutions.

Is Zeal for God, or the Honour of
 what you call the true Religion, a suf-
 ficient Plea? Why upon these very Pre-
 tences it was that *James* and *John* so
 warmly sollicitated their Master to call for
 Fire down from Heaven, to destroy the
 obstinate and rebellious Citizens of *Sa-
 maria*.

Is Difference of Opinion any Reason?
 Why in this very Article, there could
 scarce be a greater Opposition betwixt
 Light and Darkness, than between the
Jews and *Samaritans*, infomuch that they
 could not bear to talk with, or see one
 another.

Are gross Insults and Provocations
 sufficient to restrain our Clemency, and
 justify our Revenge? Why in this very
 Respect no Person could be treated with
 more

more Indignity and Contempt, than our Lord was, and yet the utmost of their Malice and Spite could not strike so much as one Spark into his divine Breast, nor induce him to exert the least Act of Power, for the Destruction of his most bitter Adversaries.

Let us therefore cultivate a Spirit of generous Compassion, and not rejoice in the Groans of the Prisoner, nor exult in the Misfortunes of the unhappy Criminal, as ye presume they would have done over you, had ye fallen into their Hands.

God forbid, that ever our Zeal should arrive at that Height of Rancour, as to strip us of all Humanity, and transform us into Wolves and Tygers.

Revenge is the sure Mark of a little and narrow Mind, whereas the great and heroick Spirit easily melts into the most tender Sympathy, and scorns to trample on a vanquish'd Foe.

And surely then, nothing can be more ornamental in the great Potentates of the Earth, than this generous and godlike
Dis.

Disposition of Mercy; how amiable must it be to see a Prince tempering his kingly Government with fatherly Love, and softening the Rigour of Judgment with a gracious Pardon?

By such a noble Clemency he resembles the supreme Ruler of the World, whose darling Attribute and Perfection is Goodness, and who daily puts up with the repeated Offences and Rebellions of his frail Creatures.

The Lord is good to all, and tender Mercies rejoyce over every Part of his Works; the comfortable Beams of his Sun he makes to shine on the Righteous and the Wicked, and sendeth down the refreshing Showers of his Rain on the Just and on the Unjust.

Let therefore all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you: and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving your weak and mistaken Brother, even as God for Christ's Sake has forgiven you. If the King of Kings has remitted our ten thousand Talents, let none of us be so cruel as to
take

take our fellow Servant by the Throat, for the poor trifling Debt of an hundred Pence.

Upon the whole, let us seriously contemplate the awful Steps of Providence, and endeavour to answer all the good Ends proposed by God's Dispensations towards us ; let it be our main and principal Concern to obtain his Favour, and secure our Souls against his final Displeasure.

The Work of Religion has been very much interrupted, and the Morals of the People not a little debauched during the late civil Commotions ; but now that the Danger is over, and Peace in some measure restored ; let us listen to the Call of the Gospel, and embrace the free and generous Offer of Salvation ; let us cultivate a sincere unaffected Piety, and improve in every good Work ; minding in this our Day the Things which belong to our Peace, before they be suddenly and unexpectedly hid from our Eyes.

F I N I S.

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 with all our hearts; let us strive to attain a sincere
 Faith, and to grow in every good
 Work; and in this our Duty, the Tithing
 will be a great help to us; let us then be
 diligent in it, and we shall find it from our

